Good morning, family. This morning we conclude our sermon series “Worship is . . .” We have discussed how worship is personal, though it is not about us. We have seen that worship is delighting in God, we having been created to worship Him, to delight in His grace and His will. Last week, we learned that to worship God is to honor Him and that to worship properly we must worship in Spirit and in Truth. Today, we will learn from God’s Holy Word that worship is warfare. It is a pro-active element on the part of the born-again believer in the on-going spiritual war that we all face. We are familiar with Ephesians 6\* in which Paul tells us that we are given our armor and instructions for how to dress for battle. In Hebrews 4\*\*, Paul affirms that God’s word is sharper than any two-edged sword. Worshipping in spirit and truth, regardless of circumstances, changes our earthly perspective to a Heavenly one. It is drawing close to the heart of God. In our

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\*Ephesians 6:11-17

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

reading in Acts, we learn that Paul and Silas have been ministering in Macedonia, specifically into the Roman colony of Philippi. They have suffered beatings, have been thrown into prison and shackled by the ankles. Look with me at Acts 16:25, in which Luke writes, “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” The word used for “pray” in this passage is “proseuchomai.” It is a word that means prayer associated with corporate worship. Now think about the circumstances: it would have been impossible for Paul and Silas to sleep in those stocks, but it was not impossible to pray. They knew that God’s presence was no less with them in a prison than it would be in a palace. God responds with an earthquake, opening doors and loosing chains. Listen, now. Have you ever given a gift to your children and then watched them enjoy it and enjoy playing with the box it came in? It warms the heart. Worship and prayer are not only weapons of our warfare, but they are also valuable gifts from our Heavenly Father. And He wants us to understand their value and worth as means of fellowship with Him, our Holy God. And just like child’s play with a gift, worship is a choice (sadly, so is complaining). In Psalm 42:8\*, David tells us that God is with him at night. The Acts tale of Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi occurs about midnight. Charles Spurgeon has written, “It’s easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight, but the skillful singer is he who can sing when there is not yet a ray of light to read by . . . Songs in the night come only from God, they are not in the power of men.” The Psalmist and the Christian apologist remind us who our Father is and who we are in Him. Worship is a Heavenly act that we can to now; we shouldn’t wait until morning.

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\* Psalm 42:8

By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me— a prayer to the God of my life.

 Christian, listen! Our worship is a testimony! Luke records in Acts 16:30 that “the prisoners were listening to” Paul and Silas pray, sing, and worship. Clearly, our testimony, our worship of our God, has the potential to help others to get to the other side of midnight. Those imprisoned along with Paul and Silas all witnessed the power of God. And while God moved the earth, He also moved the heart of the jailer for salvation (Acts 16:29-30 “The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”) We see here *radically* saved people worshipping the One who *radically* saves. Family, listen. Worship is not flattering God to obtain His favor. It’s recognizing Him for who He is, reminding ourselves that the battle is His, taking our eyes off the battle and placing them on the already accomplished *victory*.

As His chosen people (1 Peter 2:9\*), we proclaim His excellences.

 There are 168 hours in each week. All of them should be reserved for worship. As David sings, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psalm 34:1). Worship is the proper response to God. And our proper worship must be informed by the Word of God. Sacred scripture activates in the believer a heart of gratitude and ignites in the believer a renewed sense of wonder and awe. The grateful believer worships not out of religious duty but from a place of privilege as a beloved child of God. The Word inspires each believer to worship, like Paul and Silas, through service and discipleship. Worship reminds the soul of the presence of God, motivating reflection on the worth and value of the blood bought relationship with Him. We worship because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:1-6).

Paul speaks directly to me when he tells the Romans, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” That’s me, family! How great is His grace?! How precious is His love. How can I NOT worship Him?

And my worship cannot be conditional upon my circumstances but must be based on who His Word tells me He is. I desire to worship with acceptable worship, personal worship from a surrendered, obedient heart. He loosens (my) chains, testifying to His goodness. I rejoice in my Sanctification, the occupation of my soul. My worship cultivates a deep awareness of God’s presence, as Paul and Silas’ did, as yours can. Worship is a gift; worship is a weapon. Worship calls us to Him: He is its audience.

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\*1Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

PASSAGES IN SUPPORT OF THIS MESSAGE

Romans 5:1-6

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Acts 16:25-30

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”